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ARMSTRONG'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD PEACE

FOUNDER'S DAY ADDRESS
BY DR. TALCOTT WILLIAMS

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ARMSTRONG'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD PEACE*

BY TALCOTT WILLIAMS

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"AND I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God.

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven:—

"Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." —Revelation 19: 11–18

THE words I read have reminded you all that, though the very present judgments of God over all the earth are hard, yet are they true and righteous altogether. As in memory we turn back to the founder of this school, dead for twenty-two years to the world without, here always living, we see his life and his work in the light of the Great War. Never was it clearer to men, to man, to humanity, how interrelated are lands and peoples, nations, races, and all that makes the world of men. If any suffer, all suffer. If anywhere justice be denied, then at length judgment, His judgment, will be known. "Doth God pervert judgment or justice?" If there be any land or any people exploiting or being exploited, if there be any that through rule seek not the good but the goods of men, then, in due season, the

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* Address delivered in Memorial Church, Hampton Institute, on Founder's Day, January 30, 1916

Great Timekeeper, to whom a thousand years are as one day, will reach Saturday night and pay day.

When General Armstrong was born in 1839, there came for a season a pause of thirty years in the appropriation of strange lands, and too often the expropriation of the weaker races of the world. For a generation, no new conquests of wide extent were made. England ceased its attacks on Afghanistan. Burmah was left unsubdued. Anglo-Indian policy confined itself to India proper. In England, the advantage of colonies was questioned. France, in gaining Algeria (1830–1847), lost rather than gained. This colony was so visibly a liability rather than an asset that Bismarck turned Tunis over to France, avowedly to weaken her power by the surrender of hostages to colonial fortune. In 1878, when General Armstrong had completed the work of founding Hampton Institute and begun its development, the Berlin Congress met. It sought to legislate for all the world of the Near East. The colonies of the world were then 14,500,000 square miles. Of these, 6,000,000 square miles were in Australia and Canada, and 6,000,000 more were in Russian Siberia. Desert and snow covered nearly half these three areas. In 1914 Europe's colonial lands inhabitable to man had grown since 1878 by 13,000,000 square miles.

Tunis proved profitable to France, and those in power were currently reported to have made fortunes out of Tunisian bonds. England entered Egypt and wide profit followed. The mines and gold of Southern Africa were discovered, and the Boer War came. Belgium, taking in Africa the responsibilities of 1,000,000 square miles and 6,000,000 human beings, chose so to rule and govern by massacre and mutilation that the profits of its colony made all Europe thirst for the blood of men, so that the nations drank it from the golden cup of great gain. Thus began a new period in which the colonial area of forty years before was doubled. England added 5,000,000 square miles, one-half more than the area of the United States between the oceans; France rounded the span between Senegal and Algeria with another 3,000,000 square miles and in all lands gained 4,000,000 square miles; Germany sought in Africa 1,000,000 square miles, and added to them, in one land and another, a quarter of a million more. In this period of appropriation, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, men thought little of the ruled and much gain of rule. Morocco was left in the dark of night, uneducated and undeveloped. Germany and France came face to face over its possession, and at last grappled. Persia lurched through one disaster after another. The nations gathered to divide this ancient empire, never before dismembered since Cyrus. Today a German general at Bagdad faces an English general at

Kut-el-Amara, hard upon the borders of Persia. Balkan issues were handled for "prestige" and not to secure order and growth. At last Serbia, the least developed of all the flock of Europe, wronged by centuries of oppression, itself lacking in much that was needed, precipitated the great disaster in which, already, there have been entombed more than all the men, women, and children of that little land of great wrongs heroically resisted.

Seen in this light, it is the unredressed wrongs and the retarded peoples, forgotten, uneducated by the world's wealth, and undeveloped, that sow the broad sea of the future with mines floating below the smooth surface on which man seeks the profits of a world's commerce, and, when His hour comes, these mines, long hid, sink the argosies of nations, and wreck the ships that sail the Seven Seas.

Today we weigh the Service of Prevention for our land by General Armstrong on balances whose sliding weights on the steelyard of experience are the visible misery of another continent, where the innocent reap death because others have sown wrong. At this hour, when "Heaven opens and He appears who in righteousness doth judge and make war," no land stands guiltless as the angel of death cries aloud and spares not.

In his day and generation, General Armstrong in this place offered his life as a sacrifice of expiation and intercession, pouring out all his strength and his powers to save his land from the harvest of wrongs for which none today is responsible—wrongs whose fruits none in an earlier past foresaw. So measured, the metes and bounds of the work that General Armstrong did, and all his labors, are to be rated, not alone by the two races of whom we think on a day like this, but as a labor done and a duty discharged to save the land for which he had fought from the judgment that comes wherever any are neglected, forgotten, and forsaken within the borders of any land and under any flag. The full measure of his achievement is not as a service for a part of American citizenship, but for all American citizens—all and each—thus preserved from a share in wrongs which in due season always bring the punishment of those who neglect the poor that hath no helper. When, in this place fifty years ago, General Armstrong began the work of thirty years, it was to lay a foundation wider than Hampton's special task—a foundation as deep as justice and as broad as the expanding future.

Born in the Hawaiian Islands, he knew a primitive people still of unreclaimed blood. He knew the capacity, alike for imagination and for evil, of a race untilled by the years. He saw their sin of besetting idleness and their lack of moral permanence;

but he came also to know their vision of nature, to understand that races still young have upon the womb of their youth the dew of the morning, and that for them there is a new knowledge of the divine. He was aware of their passionate devotion to their tribal lays, the strange ignorance of their hands, and the deep wisdom of their hearts. Their lack and their dower were in his ken. Most touching of all, he knew—as only those who in childhood know a dusky and primitive people—their loyalty, their love, their readiness to follow, their capacity for responding to leadership, and the fashion in which they could achieve and advance, grow and go forward, in the light and example of inspiring service; and inspiring service, from the day he began his work to this hour, has been the labor, the message, the tribute of Hampton Institute to the nation.

It was out of the field of his youth and his boyhood that there came the light and the leadership by which he was guided, a personal consciousness of a race still near nature. He had learned the needs of those who still have history before them and not behind them, whose faces are set towards the morning, whose sun is yet to rise, and who do not day by day wonder whether for them many sunsets are left. All his boyhood days in Oahu lighted and guided his years at Hampton. He knew the method by which alone such a race could be reached. He understood the rule and the discipline by which those who through centuries had wandered, with weary and uncertain feet, through all the wayward ways of savage life, should be brought to the road, hard, straight, and narrow, which leads upward—a constant physical discipline, systematic drill, unremitting industry, a day whose hours knew no exception in regularity, in decision, and in order. He knew also that the air[1] in which we have joined in his memory is part of the heritage of music which the Hawaiian Islands know, for in its measures there is the rhythm of the taro beater, the beat of the drum, the strange sound of that stringed instrument with which the savage had whiled away the hours. He knew that this gift for music is universal among the undeveloped races and that they hold the treasures of a great art. Though painting and sculpture be denied them, voice and ear are theirs. He knew, too, that out of the songs of their captivity there would come from hopeless days the hope of days full of dreams, "killing care and grief of heart," which wake faith, the faith which forgives all men because it loves God. These were his weapons against carnal things and shapeless idleness wearing out the youth of a race industrially young. Out of a network of interlacing and relating routine and order, he framed that perpetual pressure which matures and gives purpose

1 "Song of the Armstrong League" Air—Hawaiian Hymn

to the youth of races. Out of his own personal genius and experience was created all that those who have known Hampton for the past quarter century have seen grow and develop here. This he did, aware that he was building, not for the present nor for the future, but for that distant horizon which is his today as he sees the land that is far off, and the King in His beauty.

Through all his boyhood days, he had been among those who saw their foothold upon the island land which was theirs slipping away from under their feet and passing into other and alien hands, leaving them paupers and vagrants on plantations which they had once owned alone. He saw that both of the races for which he was laboring must be anchored to the soil; and, above all, that the Negro must be served from the field, and that his one sure dwelling must be the fatness of the earth and the dews of heaven from above. Knowing this, and having also in his boyhood seen the savage chief wearing the cocked hat and feathers of civilization while his shanks were still unclothed, his feet bare, and his nakedness revealed, he knew that the foundations of character rested not in the wandering life of the savage race with which he had been brought in contact. The man of that race he saw in his islanded youth had been bred by zealous missionaries to a great faith, but not to skill in great industries ; he had had every enthusiasm wakened and his industrial energies were left unstirred. He had been given all that the tropics could offer and taught none of the lessons of the temperate zone.

For General Armstrong the final redemption of all men rested upon those industries, productive, fundamental, immediate, in which a man's hand comes in contact with a man's work—the great foundation upon which all races which have built to the open light of men's opportunities the temple of their history, of their laws, of their liberties, of their letters, and of their arts, have always builded through all the centuries of man. But above all this, surpassing it, he had that conviction of which I myself, a missionary's son, caught glimpses in my Asian boyhood, when I was somewhat with a swarthy and simple folk still living the life of the desert, still wandering apart from habitations, knowing neither city nor street, neither road nor field, still as wild as their people in the days of Hagar, wandering as they had under the leadership of Ishmael. Nothing so creates a passionate conviction in the brotherhood, the innate capacity, the ultimate nobility of every human being as such an experience. This companionship General Armstrong had in larger and more primitive conditions and against the background of the learning, the teaching, and the ethics of a developed race. Coming in contact in play and in study with the children of an undeveloped race, there was bred in him a consciousness which lasted through

life, that all human beings are essentially equal, that all human beings have essentially the same opportunities, that before them there stretches the same divine sky of opportunity, if they be but strong enough to seek the horizon and not be satisfied to sit or to wander where they are; and that there is nothing which any race has accomplished which all races cannot achieve. As the years have passed, and I compare the untrained whom I have known as a boy with those I have known in a life not without its contact with those who play their greater part in the world's work, this conviction deepens and grows with every passing year, and, with all that passes and all that comes, it grows clearer to me through experience that the essential things of life, the final power of humanity, the chrism, the gift of the divine which rests upon all men and women,—these things are confined to no race and denied to none of the sons and daughters of men.

But while lesser men were to learn this from experience Armstrong learned it as a vision. While other men were coming to it slowly, as the world of science is coming to this great truth today, he saw it as genius sees all things, the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end, and, knowing a great truth, lives through it and by it. This supreme conviction he had in Pentecostal measure. It flamed in him, consuming and unconsumed, like the flame which Moses saw in the bush. The place under these trees where that conviction took shape and blossomed and bore fruit for the healing of all, is as sacred today as that spot on Mount Horeb where the leader of Israel saw the light that was to burn through all the ages and lead men to righteousness and to redemption.

For Hampton itself is not unlike that block at the head of Armstrong's grave. It was thrown out of a crater of war. It fell shapeless. It was hewn as his monument, and it bears today his name. In this place each of us has over him his spirit; here he labored, here he did his work, here he lives. Zeal for the house of his fathers, that there might be no wrong within its walls, consumed him, because he knew that such wrong within the house of his fathers would reach, not alone those who suffered, but those who permitted suffering.

The discords of war had taught him, his island isolation had schooled him, and none met him through all those years but has through life carried, as do all old enough to have met him within this church, his inspiration as a perpetual succor in weary hours and moments of depression, in those instants that all men and women know when they ask themselves whether any message from above is received and whether anything planted comes out of the dry ground of the earth's desert. The memory of that vibrant figure, that erect head, that prophetic voice, those eyes

flaming with the inspiration of the divine,—all are a trumpet-call to new labors, and upon you here on my right, and upon you on my left, and you yonder, more distant, rest his chrism and his mark. Upon your heads has been laid the hand of his spiritual blessing, and, through all your needs, you will never pass beyond the light of his presence and the shadow of his power. You who live here follow the follower of this Moses, our Aaron, that priest of God, the high priest of Hampton, whose morning and evening sacrifice has been the daily service of the life known to us all, approved of his Master and ours, and blessed of the Spirit.

From here went forth the Joshua who was to win a new home and achieve great things—so lately gone. The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! From here, I rejoice to remember, there is soon to go the Caleb who succeeds him. For these twain, in the path of education a generation ago, were wiser in spying out the land of learning than seventy-fold others who were treading other paths. Out of weakness these were made strong, they have wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions—the lions of prejudice.

Standing here before you, the teachers of Hampton, for the first time as a teacher, and speaking to those he taught, where he taught, looking upon this harvest reaped where every year sees the yearly probate of his will, executed and entered through the courts of God, we remember his labor and his constant sacrifice, knowing well that he said, "What is commonly called sacrifice is the best, happiest use of one's self and one's resources." We recollect on this day devoted to his memory that the races for which he was laboring were not alone the races for which he seemed to labor, but the race to which he belonged, his work doing its abundant share that in a day when the world was becoming selfish and was seeking to exploit other races, the record and the score of his land should be clean, and its hands emptied of the lawless profits of a stronger race. Remembering all these things, let us, as teachers teaching in his spirit, wherever our lot may be, so teach in the day of our responsibility and our duty, that there be builded into the great fabric of this nation no wrong rendered stronger and more triumphant, and no evil done the weak; but that there be, through righteousness done in our border to every race within our gates, a sure and everlasting hope in the everlasting power of God, whose judgments are true and righteous altogether.